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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Parole Board Responds to Introduction of Substitute to SB 42 in Committee
April 10, 2019**

Montgomery, AL- In response to the introduction of a substitute to SB 42 sponsored by Senator Cam Ward, the Board of Pardons and Paroles releases the following statement:

In August 2018, Executive Director Eddie Cook requested the Parole Board order a three-year limit to the amount of time which an inmate could be scheduled for early parole consideration. This requested policy change limited the amount of time allowed for early consideration to a maximum of three years. Prior to Mr. Cook's appointment to Executive Director, an inmate or his or her representative could request a parole consideration hearing that could be early by any amount of time, if a Review Committee voted to docket the case. Mr. Cook's recommendation to the Board was implemented, based upon his concerns to the

Board that inconsistencies among these early considerations were unfair to victims and law enforcement involved in their cases.

In September 2018, the Board and docket unit discovered two cases were set early accidentally, as the result of a human error in the hand-calculation of the guideline set dates. As a result, our docket unit Division Director began verifying calculations in every case prior to their hearing. In fact, several cases where notices had already been sent were cancelled due to erroneous calculations, with notice sent to the Attorney General, victims, law enforcement, and inmates. A representative of the Attorney General called our office to inquire as to the reason for the cancellations. It was explained to the AG representative the cases were set in error.

On October 15, 2018, a meeting was held with Governor Ivey and the Attorney General. Board members again acknowledged previous errors in calculations of parole guideline set dates, and advised each case was being scrutinized to prevent this from re-occurring. This has been recognized repeatedly from that point, in the Corrective Action Plan, and subsequent correspondence with the Governor and the Attorney General. These human errors hardly warrant the statement that “the parole board is not following its own rules and the system is broken.”

The thorough responses to every inquiry, instruction, and request by Governor Ivey and the Attorney General clearly demonstrate the Board is accountable to the concerns of the public which have led to the Governor’s concerns. Each Board member is currently nominated through a committee comprised of the Lt. Governor, the Supreme Court Chief Justice, the presiding Criminal Appeals Judge, the Senate President pro tem, and the Speaker of the House, is appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and subject to impeachment. The bill proposed by the Attorney General seeks to eliminate the nominating committee from this process. Further, the legislation only seeks to remove five government leaders from the nominating process, but does not seek to change this appointment, confirmation, or impeachment provision for Parole Board members. It seeks to remove authority for appointment of the agency’s Executive Director from the Board, which has historically appointed the Executive Director. Candidates for the position have been sworn officers, who are qualified candidates and have demonstrated their leadership abilities and competency to the Board regarding the work of the agency. The Board works closely with these officers on a full-time basis during their term.

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